



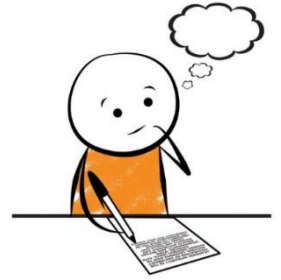
University of  
South Australia

# Understanding assignment tasks

*Learning Advisers*

*Student Engagement Unit (SEU)*

# In this workshop we will cover:



- how to identify assignment requirements
- how to differentiate between assignment types
- how to analyse assignment questions
- where to find useful resources & support

# What questions could you ask to help yourself understand assignment requirements?

- How does the assignment relate to the course objectives and content?
- What are you being asked to do?
- What is the purpose?
- Who is the audience?
- How will it be marked?
- How will you structure it?
- What sources are required, and how will you reference them?
- What kind of language is needed?



Check for this information at the start of the study period

# Feedback forms help in understanding requirements

	High distinction
Organisation	Clear introduction (including thesis statement), clear topic sentences, one main idea per paragraph, logical argument developed across essay, conclusion sums up main ideas in essay and restates thesis.....

## Common areas assessed:

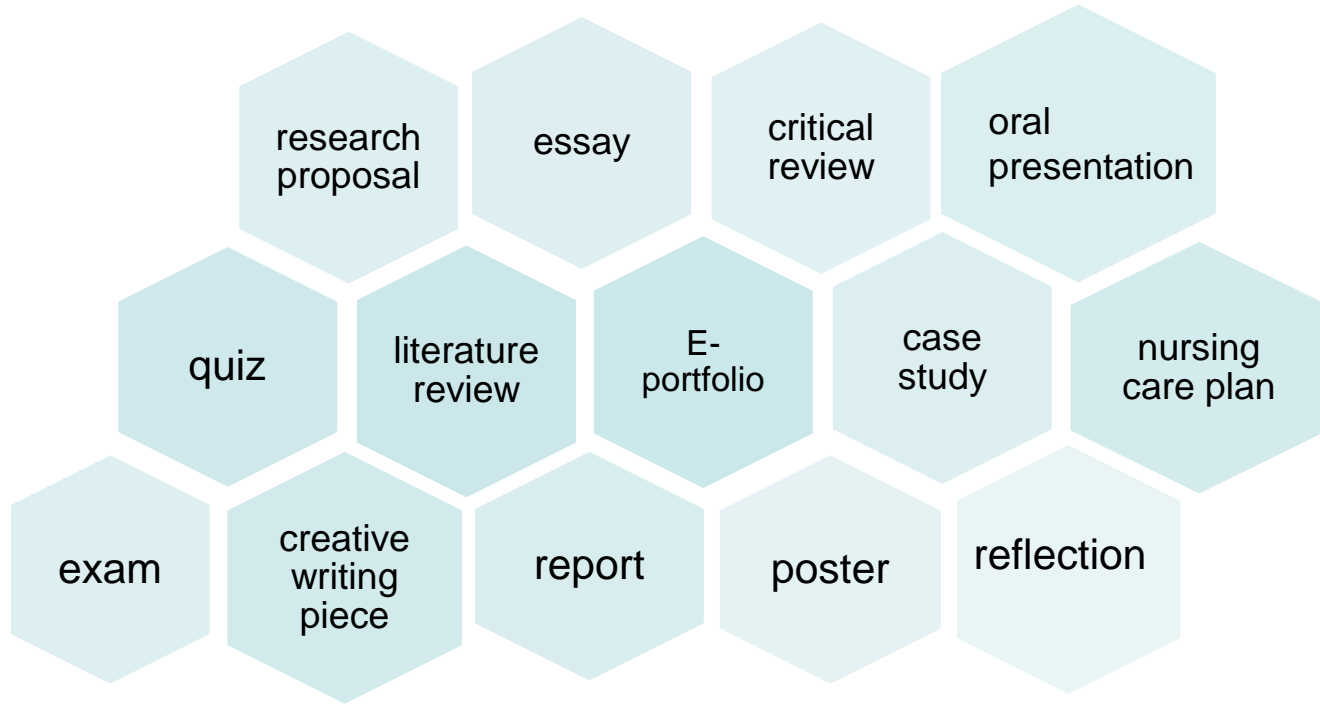
- content
- quality of ideas and argument
- depth of research
- referencing
- structure
- format/presentation
- grammar and expression

Check course materials for specific feedback form for your task

# What types of assignments are you doing?



# Types of assignments at uni



and more...

<b>Task</b>	<b>Essay</b>	<b>Report</b>	<b>Reflective paper</b>	<b>Critical review</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- give an argument</li> <li>- provide support/evidence</li> <li>- persuade</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- provide information or solutions</li> <li>- provide support/evidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reflect on, analyse &amp; evaluate learning experiences &amp; inform practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- summarise, analyse and evaluate academic article/s</li> </ul>
<b>Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- introduction</li> <li>- body paragraphs</li> <li>- conclusion</li> <li>- reference list</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- executive summary, abstract</li> <li>- introduction, body, conclusion</li> <li>- recommendations</li> <li>- headings or sub-headings</li> <li>- appendices</li> <li>- reference list</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- paragraphs</li> <li>- may include introduction, conclusion and or headings (see essays and reports)</li> <li>- references if sources used</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- introduction</li> <li>- summary</li> <li>- critique</li> <li>- conclusion</li> <li>- reference list</li> </ul>
<b>Language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- formal</li> <li>- objective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- formal</li> <li>- objective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- may include formal and/or informal language</li> <li>- more subjective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- formal</li> <li>- objective</li> </ul>

# What's the task ?

Identify the type of assignment and think about:

- purpose
- structure
- language

Essay - look at issue objectively; present persuasive argument based on evidence



1. While realism and naturalism had similar values, there are some key differences in their approach. Discuss.

2. Drawing on your journal entries during your placement, identify links in relation to course content and readings.

Reflective writing - reflect on, analyse own learning & show connection to theories



# What's the task (cont.)?

Identify the type of assignment and think about:

- purpose
- structure
- language

Critical review -  
summarise, analyse &  
evaluate an article



3. Critically evaluate Pavé's (2013) study in light of one of the key concepts presented in the course.

4. Accent Ltd. is opening a centre in Laos. Provide an analysis of the implications for staff relocating, in relation to cross-cultural communication. Suggest strategies to assist with the relocation in this regard.

Report - provide  
information &  
recommendations



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# Analyse the question - example

Discuss the relationship between transactional and transformational styles of leadership. Which of these styles would you recommend in the context of a contemporary business?

**Due:** dd/mm/yy

**Length:** 1500 words

# Analyse the question

1. Check any **unfamiliar words**
2. Find the **instruction / directive / task word(s)** which tells you what to do (e.g. compare, discuss, explain)
3. Find the **content / information words** (e.g. what are you being asked to compare, discuss, explain?)
4. Find the **limits** to the essay (these can be practical limits and information limits)



Discuss the relationship between transactional and transformational styles of leadership. Which of these styles is best suited in the context of a contemporary business?

1. Check any **unfamiliar words**
2. Find the **instruction/directive/task** words

**Discuss** the relationship between.....

N.B. Sometimes they are implied

**Recommend** one of these styles...

Discuss the relationship between transactional and transformational styles of leadership. Which of these styles is best suited in the context of a contemporary business?

3. Use the **instruction / directive / task word** and ask 'what?'  
This helps find the **content / information words** and what you need to focus on.

Discuss **what?**

- ...the relationship between transactional and transformational styles of leadership

Recommend **what?**

- ...one of these styles

Discuss the relationship between transactional and transformational styles of leadership. Which of these styles is best suited in the context of a contemporary business?

4. Find the **limits** to the essay – which aspect of the information will you be addressing?

What are the **information limits**?

- ...in the context of a contemporary business

What are the **practical limits**?

- Due date: dd/mm/yy
- Length: 1500 words

# Analyse the question – practice



Accent Ltd. is opening a centre in Laos. Provide an analysis of the implications for staff relocating, in relation to cross-cultural communication. Suggest strategies to assist with the relocation in this regard.

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## 1. Check any **unfamiliar words**

Consider the key words in relation to your discipline:

- What does “cross-cultural communication” mean?
- How is “cross-cultural communication” defined in your discipline area?



Accent Ltd. is opening a centre in Laos. Provide an analysis of the implications for staff relocating, in relation to cross-cultural communication. Suggest strategies to assist with the relocation in this regard.



2. Find the **instruction/directive/task** words

Provide an analysis = Analyse

Suggest = Recommend = Offer = Give

Accent Ltd. is opening a centre in Laos. Provide an analysis of the implications for staff relocating, in relation to cross-cultural communication. Suggest strategies to assist with the relocation in this regard.



3. Find the **content/information words** (use the instruction word + what?)

Analyse...

**implications for staff relocating**

Suggest...

**strategies to assist with the relocation**

Accent Ltd. is opening a centre in Laos. Provide an analysis of the implications for staff relocating, in relation to cross-cultural communication. Suggest strategies to assist with the relocation in this regard.



4. Find the **limits** to the assignment (practical and information limits)

...in relation to cross cultural communication.

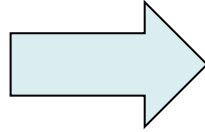
...in this regard.

Word limit?

Due date?

# The assignment writing process

- **Understanding requirements**
- Planning
- Researching
- Reading and note-taking
- Organising
- Drafting
- Editing & proofreading

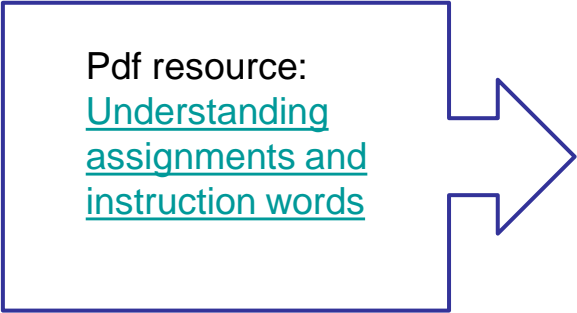


The assignment writing process is not linear, but involves back-looping (Marshall, 1999, p. 259)

# Resources on instruction words

[www.unisa.edu.au/studyhelp](http://www.unisa.edu.au/studyhelp)

Pdf resource:  
[Understanding assignments and instruction words](#)



## Instruction words and their meanings

(adapted from Marshall & Rowland, 1993; Peters, 1985)

Instructions	Meaning
<b>analyse</b>	examine something closely in terms of its parts and how they are related to each other
<b>argue</b>	present a case for and/or against something
<b>assess</b>	decide on the value of something
<b>compare</b>	discuss two or more things in terms of their similarities and differences
<b>criticise</b>	give a judgement and support it with evidence
<b>define</b>	make clear what is meant by something; or use a definition(s) to explore a concept
<b>describe</b>	present a detailed account of something
<b>discuss</b>	offer some interpretation or evaluation of something; present a judgment on the value of arguments for and against something
<b>enumerate</b>	give an item by item account of something
<b>evaluate</b>	form a judgment about the value of something
<b>examine</b>	inspect something in detail and investigate the implications
<b>explain</b>	make clear the details of something; show the reason for, or underlying cause of, or the means by which something occurs
<b>illustrate</b>	offer an example(s) to show how or that something happens; explain a concept by giving examples
<b>interpret</b>	make clear the meaning of something and its implications

# Access this PPT presentation + more

Go to [Study Help](#) > Workshops & more help > [Understanding assignments](#)



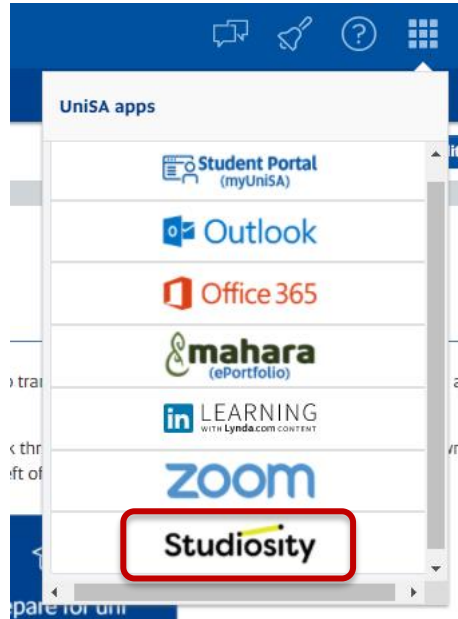
**Understanding  
assignments**

- Access this PowerPoint presentation
- Learn more about understanding assignments
- Analyse your assignment task using an interactive resource

# Online study support 24/7

# Studiosity

Access via your course sites



**Connect Live**

**Connect live**

- Connect to an expert tutor online

**Writing feedback service**

- Upload a writing draft & receive feedback within 24 hours
- Note: not a proofreading service



**Writing Feedback**

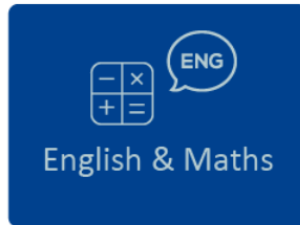
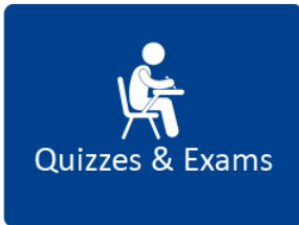
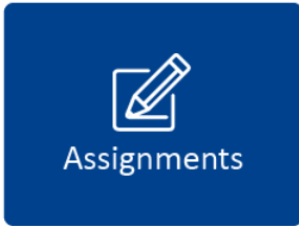


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# Learning support at UniSA

Learning Advisers provide resources and advice on areas such as:

- Understanding different assignment tasks
- Academic writing
- Referencing and academic integrity
- Adapting to university study



- ❑ Explore [Study Help](#) online resources
- ❑ Talk to a Learning Adviser (in person, Zoom or phone) - [Book an appointment online](#) or contact [Campus Central](#)



# References

Marshall, L. (1999). *A learning companion: Your guide to practising independent learning* (3rd ed.). Murdoch University.